Due to last network of Post Offices in remote areas of the country the figure as on 30th September, 1998 is available only.

(c) The procedures for withdrawing money from Post Office Savings Bank is very simple and customer friendly. The procedures followed for withdrawing money are not dated and are in tune with the procedures followed by other financial instructions and the need of the users.

(d) The streamling of procedures is an ongoing process. As and when difficulty is faced by the customer or any lacuna and weakness noticed in the procedures the same are taken care of by the Department and MOF from time to time. DOP undertakes SB operation work on behalf of MOF on agency basis.

बिहार में डाकघर

536. **श्रीमती सरोज दुबे:** क्या **प्रधान मंत्री** यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार बिहार के ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में डाकघरों की नई शाखाएं खोलने का विचार रखती है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है;

(ग) क्या इस संबंध में कोई लक्ष्य निर्धारित किया गया है;

(घ) यदि हां, तो तत्संबंधी ब्यौरा क्या है; और

(ङ) सरकार द्वारा ग्रामीण लोगों को डाक सुविधाएं प्रदान करने के लिए क्या कदम उठाए गए हैं?

संचार मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री कबीन्द्र पुरकायस्थ): (क) से (घ) जी हां वार्षिक योजना 1998-99 में बिहार के ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में 60 अतिरिक्त विभागीय शाखा डाकघर खोलने का प्रस्ताव है बशर्ते कि संसाधन उपलब्ध रहें।

(ङ) बिहार राज्य के ग्रामीण क्षेत्र में निम्नलिखित डाकघर पहले ही कार्य कर रहे हैं:

प्रधान डाकघर	01
विभागीय उप डाकघर	819
अतिरिक्त विभागीय उप डाकघर	101
अतिरिक्त विभागीय शाखा डाकघर	10176

दूरसंचार निगम परिषद

537. **श्रीमती सरोज दुबे:** क्या **प्रधान मंत्री** यह बताने की कृपा करेंगे कि:

(क) क्या सरकार नई दिल्ली नगर पालिका परिषद की तर्ज पर दूरसंचार निगम परिषद् गठित करने का विचार रखती है;

(ख) यदि हां, तो क्या इससे दूरसंचार सेवाओं में कोई गुणात्मक सुधार होगा; और

(ग) यदि हां, तो इस संबंध में सरकार की क्या प्रतिक्रिया है?

संचार मंत्रालय में राज्य मंत्री (श्री कबीन्द्र पुरकायस्थ): (क) जी नहीं।

(ख) और (ग) उपर्युक्त भाग (क) के उत्तर को देखते हुए प्रश्न नहीं उठता।

Restructuring of DOT

538. SHRI GOVINDRAO ADIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news-item published in the Hindustan Times dated the 31st August, 1998 under the caption "Telecom Unions against Corporation of DOT";

(b) if so, the reaction of Government to the observations made therein and facts of the matter;

(c) the details of steps taken/proposed to be taken in this regard; and

(d) what is the present status of reforms proposed in restructuring of DOT and other corporates under Department of Telecommunication?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) A statement of facts is annexed (*See* below).

Statement

Efforts were made in the past few months to revive the debate on restructuring of Department of Telecom including the option of corporatisation with a view to take a decision in the matter. Meetings were held with the representatives of staff union/officer's Associations. The National Federation of Telecom Employees and the Federation of National Telecom Organisation initially indicated that the proposed restructuring (by way of corporatisation) may be effected through an Act of Parliament thereby creating a statutory corporation which would obviate such problems as immediate payment of retirement benefits, hike in staff wages, payment of retirement benefits, payment of taxes and the apprehension of staff that there would be eventually privatisation. It was also indicated that the financial viability of the corporation and also service conditions of the employees needs to be looked into. The Bharitiya Telecom Employees Federation indicated that they are not in favour of corporatisation on the ground that, as a business oriented unit, the corporation may not be inclined to carry out social obligation. Similarly, All India Telecom Employees Union Class III (Namboodiri) was also not in favour of corporatisation.

Divergent views have been expressed by different service Associations/Unions with regard to the corporatisation of DOT. The Indian Telecommunications Service Associations (ITSA) was of the view that there is no need to corporatise the operating wing of DOT as these functions can be performed satisfactorily within the governmental set-up.

The proposal to convert the operating arm of Department of Telecommunications (DOT) into a corporation has been under consideration. However, at this stage, the objective is proposed to be achieved by setting up a Telecom Services Board to manage the service operations of DOT.'

Telephone Tariff

539. SHRI RAHASBIHARI BARIK: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to increase the tariff of telephones;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) whether Government have received any objections on the above proposals; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the action taken by Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI KABINDRA PURKAYASTHA): (a) and (b) The TRAI formed under the TRAI Act, 1997 has been entrusted with the function of fixing tariffs of various telecom services. The TRAI has brought out a consultation paper on telecom pricing suggesting interalia increase in rental and reduction in long distance tariff to rebalance the tariff. The proposal of TRAI summarised at Annexure (*See* Appendix 185, Annexure No. 13] are at present being discussed by TRAI with Service Providers, Consumer organisations and the general public, etc. to elicit their response.

(c) and (d) After circulation by TRAI of their consultation paper representations from some individual consumers and consumer organisations have been received pleading for reduction in rental. These have been forwarded to TRAI for appropriate action.

Unpaid Bills of DOT and MTNL

540. KUMARI NIRMALA DESHPANDE: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that unpaid bills of the Department of Telecommunication (DOT) and Mahanagar Telephone Nigam